

The authors go far beyond the stereotypical aesthetic appeal of our natural environment, evidenced by the attention paid to invertebrates. Witchetty grubs, centipedes, jewel spiders and golden orb spiders are just a few of the many invertebrates featured in the colourful photographs, as well as being discussed in the text.

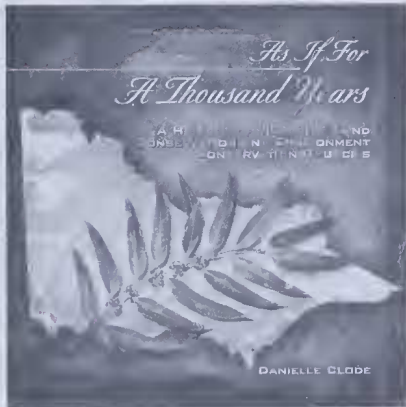
This book does not aim to be a scientific reference, although it does draw on some excellent resources, imploring the reader to study further. The bibliography spans seven pages, and is broken into subheadings including Mammals, Frogs and Reptiles, and Plants, with the largest section being Background Scientific Literature. The final two chapters, (Woodland Management and Conservation and The Future) are the most pertinent, as the authors venture beyond dire forecasts and faint messages of hope. Instead, concise, proven actions are provided for those striving to do more for these

wondrous landscapes. These actions are summarised well on page 132, and include steps such as 'Consider the size and shape of planting' and 'Leave dead saplings and trees as well as fallen branches and logs within restored areas – they will have important habitat value'.

*Woodlands: a disappearing landscape* has broad appeal, but in its final chapters funnels a range of information into a very precise direction, which is to ensure that future generations can enjoy woodlands as much as we do. It would be ideal for landowners who wish to learn more about and enhance the woodlands on their properties, and would be well received by any naturalist.

**Rebecca J Steer**

Botanist, Biosis Research Pty Ltd  
449 Doveton Street North  
Ballarat, Victoria 3350.



**As if for a thousand years:  
a history of Victoria's Land  
Conservation and  
Environment Conservation  
Councils**

by Danielle Clode

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The Land Conservation Council (LCC) (1971–1997) and its successors, the Environment Conservation Council (ECC) (1998–2001) and the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) (2002–present) are a 'uniquely successful public land planning system like no other in the world' (p. 136), so a good history of decision-making about the most appropriate use of public land is both valuable and timely. Clode's scholarship is accessible, data-rich, informative and readable.

Histories of public institutions, particularly those commissioned or published by

the institutions themselves, have a high risk of being sanitised 'spin'. Clode avoids this by skilfully interweaving insightful and frank comments of both the political and other players (e.g. Ministers Borthwick and Kirner, Calder) into a readable 'story'. The socio-political milieu in which the institution was created is very well covered and the context of subsequent changes is well explained. After the Little Desert debate of the late 1960s (to clear or not to clear?), Bill Borthwick became Minister of Lands, Soldier Settlement and Conservation (*my how we have changed*).

He legislatively created and subsequently defended the independence of the LCC. Clode enlivens the text with personal communications of this far-sighted politician to whom the book is appropriately dedicated and whose words provide the title.

Apart from reflections of various 'players', the dryness of strict chronology is avoided by other techniques. Comments on the LCC reports of each study area, linked to their reviews and new innovations, are discussed in separate boxes at the end of each chapter. Important themes such as mapping of vegetation ('structural' suited foresters, while floristics suited the botanists and evolved into Ecological Vegetation Classes) are discussed in the context of information bases. Apart from the extensive tables and Figures, the Appendices (A-G) provide a wealth of detailed information including the Acts and personnel (Councillors and *all* staff) by year. There is also an index, always useful for ongoing reference.

Institutions are led by people and Clode illustrates how successive Chairmen (Dimmick, Scott and Saunders) were able to bring their strengths (and weaknesses) to the evolving institution that, whilst independent, worked 'within the confines of Government policy'. For example, after a Research Officer's initial greeting of '*Pleased to meet you Sam*', he was not spoken to by Chairman Dimmick for his entire three years at the LCC (p 51) – which was a *very* small organization. Scott would defend Dimmick's hard-won independence, yet added more successful consultation to the mix, which 'was one of the defining features of the LCC' (p 67). This consultation also assisted public education and thus resolution/acceptance of sometimes controversial decisions.

Efforts of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria and Victorian National Parks Association at strategic periods illustrate how the community can affect the shape and direction of institutions. Broader community and institutional changes are woven into the story providing perspectives that strengthen the analysis (e.g. 'planning' of the 1960s and the rise of 'managerialism'

from the 1980s onward at the expense of technical expertise). This allows the author to explain the evolution of the institution and yet maintain a critical eye.

In Chapter 9 it is suggested that the functions of the LCC and ECC were relatively similar, and differed only in the particular emphasis accorded to 'development' in the ECC's functions. However (as seen from the Appendices), a major difference was that the LCC's function was to recommend on the 'use of public land with a view to the *balanced use of land* in Victoria' whereas the ECC was required to recommend on the 'balanced use of public land'. The latter is often stated as the LCC's function but this was not so, as Chapter 2 discusses. It is unclear whether the different wording in the ECC functions was inadvertent or deliberate. Interestingly, the proposed legislation for VEAC was to include private land. However, the revised Act limited it to public land.

The book is well presented and laid out, although the photographs appear biased toward the more recent, and Chapter 1 has several references that do not appear in the reference list. More seriously, contemporaneous with the LCC there was a national debate on indigenous land rights and related issues. Clode notes that the LCC expanded consultation with traditional Koori owners from the early 1980s; however, establishment of reserves (including reserved forest) and parks over uncommitted crown land before 1994 (LCC's *raison d'être*) would inadvertently adversely affect the Koori's native title rights under the *Native Title Act*, which flowed from the Mabo decision (1992). Discussion of this important theme is a surprising gap in an otherwise scholarly work. Clode's book will become an important reference about a significant institution.

**Ian Mansergh**

Department of Sustainability and Environment,  
8 Nicholson Street, East Melbourne, Victoria 3002